DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 384 043 CS 214 898

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TITLE The Rhetoric of Relations between Research and Teaching.
PUB DATE Mar 95
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (46th, Washington, DC, March 23-25, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audience Awareness; English Departments; Higher Education; Scholarship; *Teaching (Occupation); *Writing (Composition); Writing Instruction; *Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS Academic Discourse Communities; *College Composition and Communication (Journal); Reciprocal Interdependence; *Research Teaching Relationship

ABSTRACT

An exploration was made of the discursive conventions for inscribing a reciprocal relationship between research activities and teaching practices typical of articles published in "College Composition and Communication." The study looked at 31 essays published in the 1993 volume. Ten recurring features of the articles were identified; each feature, which appeared at least once in at least one third of the essays, relates the theories of composing and research to teaching composition. Any one or more of these ten features are employed to perform one of three generic social actions: (1) construction of approved author/audience relations and identities; (2) construction of recognized exigencies or situations that compel the rhetorical action the text undertakes; and (3) construction of acceptable stories or narratives about professional life. Since the scope of the present essay is limited, it focuses on only one of the 10 features--references to teaching in statements of purpose or plans for the essay. A review of four articles shows that the connection between research and writing is not necessary to justify the publication of these articles. Their audience, which would be the academic elite, would doubtless be interested in reading a so-called "knowledge for its own sake" article. The "we" of these articles--all thoughtful and responsible writing teachers--is a collaboratively and collectively composed fiction that conveniently creates a common bond for members of a methodologically, epistemologically, and ideologically diverse community who often hold conflicting views. (Contains nine references.) (TB)

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ED 384 043

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March 1995, Washington, DC

TITLE: **The Rhetoric of Relations between Research and Teaching**

ABSTRACT: This essay explores the discursive conventions for inscribing a reciprocal relationship between research activities and teaching practices typical of articles published in the 1993 volume of CCC.

TEXT:

I have recently moved from an institution which defines itself as a "teaching university" that values, encourages, and expects good research from its faculty to an institution that defines itself as a "research university" that values, encourages, and expects good teaching from its faculty. Sorting out the implications of the two institutions' conflicting views of appropriate relations between teaching and research for myself as a composition studies teacher and researcher has prompted the questions I address here.

In this essay, I will examine one institutional site where my professional activities are located--the Conference on College Composition and Communication. I will be exploring the discursive conventions for inscribing a reciprocal relationship between research activities and teaching practices typical of articles published in the organization's official journal, College Composition and Communication. As its front matter indicates,

> College Composition and Communication publishes articles dealing with the theory, practice, history, and politics of composition and its teaching at all

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> college, levels; research into the processes and teaching of writing; the preparation of writing teachers; and the relationship of literature, language studies, rhetoric, communications theory, and other fields to composition and its teaching.

This orientation makes CCC a useful example of attempts to integrate the research activities and teaching activities of members of an academic community. As a print medium, the journal provides relatively permanent and accessible data for a study of discursive negotiations of the relationship between these two activities.

The thirty-one essays published in 1993 (volume 44) serve as the basis for my study. Volume 44 was the last year of CCC under the editorship of Richard Gebhardt and his editorial board and thus probably fairly represents the conventions and expectations for CCC articles under their direction. I have analyzed the way the authors and editors have discursively negotiated the construction of relations between teaching and rhetoric in each of these essays. (I have not included book reviews or comment and response exchanges because these constitute separate genres.)

Using Carolyn Miller's definition of genre as social action, I have viewed these discursive negotiations as generic features of CCC essays. Miller has posited a specifically rhetorical conception of genre, arguing that "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish"

(151). Miller is advocating a pragmatic classification system for discourse--one based on rhetorical action--because it considers both form and substance.

As my analysis will demonstrate, one social action performed by the generic CCC essay is to negotiate a connection between developing knowledge about composing and teaching composition. This discursive negotiation is complemented in these essays by an inscription/description of membership in the professional community of composition studies in terms of experience and involvement in teaching writing. Miller explains that "what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have" (165). One of the ends CCC authors may have, as I will show, is to relate composing research and theory to composition teaching.

I have identified ten recurring features in the thirty-one essays published in 1993 that in one way or another explicitly relate theories of composing and research on composing to teaching composition. Each of these features appeared at least once in at least one third of the essays:

1. Mentions of teaching activities in authors' biographical notes
2. Identification of the author as a teacher in the text of the essay
3. Identification of the intended readers as teachers in the text of the essay

4. "Teaching" or teaching-related terms used in essay titles

5. References to teaching in statements of purpose or plans for the essay

6. Mention of teaching in the frame of the essay (opening and closing paragraphs)

7. An "implications for teaching" section (usually at the end of the essay)

8. Explicit discussions of the teaching vs. research or scholarship dichotomy

9. General theoretical statements about composing based on specific details from a particular teaching context.

10. Illustrations of abstract, theoretical concepts about composing with concrete examples from a particular teaching context.

Any one or more of these ten features may be employed to perform one of three generic social actions: 1) construction of approved author/audience relations and identities; 2) construction of recognized exigencies or situations that compel the rhetorical action the text undertakes; and 3) construction of acceptable stories or narratives about professional life.

The approved author/audience relation in these CCC essays is teacher-to-teacher, usually achieved by the use of "we" as a pronoun for an antecedent "teachers."

The exigence which gives rise to the essay is presented as

one of three situations or problems:

1) relevant and important theory or research on some aspect of composing is not known to composition teachers, so they must be informed by this essay;

2) established theory and research on composing is not being applied or is being misapplied in the composition classroom, so teachers must be shown appropriate ways to apply theory and research by this essay; and

3) existing composing theory does not account for some significant aspect of classroom practice or composing research has not addressed an important question about classroom practice, so new theory or research should be presented and considered by this essay.

One of the most common narratives constructed in the 1993 essays is a story of a transformation of students or teachers resulting from a change in classroom practice.

Since the scope of my essay is limited, I will focus on only one of the ten generic features I've listed: references to teaching in statements of purpose or plans for the essay. This feature is one of the most rhetorically interesting because, I believe, it requires the most careful discursive negotiations to effect the desired social action. (In the following excerpts the use of bold typeface is my own.) I will be taking my examples from four essays which, in my view, could have stood alone

without explicit reference to teaching.

In his essay "Modeling Theory and Composing Process Models," which appeared in the February 1993 issue of CCC, Michael Pemberton's construction of a relation between teaching and research is that a primary purpose of research on composing processes is to inform the teaching of writing. Pemberton describes the exigence for his discussion of composing process models as follows:

> Presumably, part of the research mission in composition studies is descriptive--in order to teach writing effectively, we must know as much as possible about how people write; in order to know how people write, we must observe them writing under a variety of conditions and describe what we observe them doing.

Composing process models are certainly a viable subject for research and theoretical discussions apart from any pedagogical implications, as the sentences which precede and follow the above quotation indicate:

> Questions about models and modeling ultimately strike at the heart of our purpose in studying composing process. [Passage quoted above was originally placed here.] Unless we are willing to maintain that all writers approach writing tasks idiosyncratically, we must believe that there are certain commonalities among writers, and if there are commonalities, we should be able to represent or model them in some way. (41)

Though a desire to describe the "commonalities among writers" is surely reason enough to study composing process models, Pemberton has chosen to identify the need to "teach writing effectively" as the justification for his analysis. The question is: why? I will get to some speculative answers shortly, but first let me demonstrate that other CCC authors also describe pedagogically-motivated exigencies for their work.

In "The Shape of Text to Come: The Texture of Print on Screens," which appeared in the May 1993 issue, Stephen A. Bernhardt constructs a slightly different relationship between teaching and scholarship, implying that responsible teachers are informed and think critically about technological development:

> Texts are undergoing monumental transformation as the medium of presentation shifts from paper to screen. We need to constantly appraise the broad drifts in the shape of text--to anticipate what now constitutes and what will soon constitute a well-formed text. We need to think about how readers interact with text--what they do with it and how, We need to anticipate where text is going: the shape of text to come. (151). . .

Why do we need to do all this? Not for our own writing and reading but for that of our students. Bernhardt makes clear claims about the critical exigence that gives rise to his essay in the sentence which follows the above passage:

> We need first to understand the directions that computers are taking writing language, and then to consider these changes as we teach our students strategies for reading and writing text in a new age. (152)

That is, according to Bernhardt: responsible teachers are informed and think critically about technological developments. We need to understand so we can teach.

In "Waiting for Answerability: Bakhtin and Composition Studies," which appeared in the October 1993 issue, Helen Rothschild Ewald claims that the exigence for her essay is the composition studies community's general ignorance of Bakhtin's concept of "answerability."

> It is the intention of this article to foreground the issue of answerability, as it is found in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and as it could be found in the field of composition. . . . Before exploring the specific issue of answerability, then, I think it would be instructive to examine how Bakhtin's ideas have been used to authorize various research in the disciplines. Such an examination will not only help to situate Bakhtin (the impulse to situate is also Bakhtinian), but will also reveal which Bakhtinian concepts have (and have not) been trumpeted in current composition research. (351-352)

Ewald's completion of this explanation of the exigence for her essay implies a claim about the relation between scholarship and teaching:

> [This examination] will help to establish a context for our consideration of the place of answerability in writing instruction.

Ewald's claim might be stated as this: One of the main criteria for evaluating composing theory is its relevance to the classroom.

Peter Mortensen and Gesa A. Kirsch seem to make a similar claim in their essay "On Authority in the Study of Writing," which appeared in the December issue. They suggest that dominant theory in English studies does not account for a significant aspect of teaching composition, thus establishing the exigence for their discussion of concepts of authority:

> . . .Succumbing to modernity unraveled, theories of authorship and authority supposedly ceased to explain the production and reception of written discourse. Language itself--and not the human agents and agency of its performance--thus emerged as the central concern of English studies.

The sentence which immediately follows this passage turns what might have otherwise been an essay on the development of ideas of authority in the recent history of discourse theory into an

evaluation of a particular theory's usefulness to teaching writing:

> **This turn of events continues to pose a perplexing question for those of us who study and teach writing. How are we to account for the theoretical erasure of the authority that constitutes the writers--the authors--we face everyday in our composition classrooms? (556)**

Again, to paraphrase Mortensen and Kirsch, theories of authorship are useful only if they can account for elements of the pedagogical situation.

Several reasons might be offered for the generic inscriptions of a relationship between teaching and research I have identified above. Louise W. Phelps suggests that "It is arguable that most scholarship in composition is not written only for scholars, or even chiefly for scholars, but for teachers (including other scholars as practitioners)" ("Writing the New Rhetoric", 71). However, the CCC authors--and perhaps even CCC readers--who are in fact involved in teaching undergraduate writing are not typical composition teachers but rather a small and privileged class within the entire corps of composition teachers. And many of this elite would doubtless be interested in reading a so-called "knowledge for its own sake" article. Clearly, the constructed "we" of the generic CCC essay, all

thoughtful and responsible writing teachers, is not the actual "we" who write and read CCC essays. Why, then, are composition studies professionals always constructed as teachers by the generic CCC essay?

Lynn Worsham describes composition studies' apparent preoccupation with teaching as our "pedagogical imperative." This pedagogical imperative for composition studies is, I believe, a collaboratively and collectively composed "fiction" that conveniently creates a common bond for members of a methodologically, epistemologically, and ideologically diverse community who hold and advocate often conflicting views. As a still-emerging field, composition studies has needed some unifying principle, and affirmations of a shared commitment to improving the teaching of writing have successfully served that purpose. The so-called pedagogical imperative is a "convenient fiction" in the sense that it is something composition professionals have invented, something we have made because it is suited to our needs.

There are, however, some drawbacks to obedience of the pedagogical imperative. Within composition studies, obedience to the pedagogical imperative has meant marginalization of studies of composing sites outside the classroom--such as business, industry, and scholarly disciplines--and marginalization of composing process studies with writers who are not our students.

Professionally, it has meant that the intellectual work of

theorists and researchers of composing has been associated with the reproductive, domestic labor of teaching rather than the productive labor of making knowledge. Arguments for valuing the knowledge-making contributions of practitioner lore--such as those by Stephen North, Louise Phelps, and Patricia Harkin--have not yet sufficiently altered our perceptions of composition teaching as the equivalent of unwaged domestic labor. And our academic institutions are still influenced enough by capitalist economic practices to value productive labor over reproductive labor.

The generic conventions of CCC essays clearly run counter to the traditional opposition between research and teaching constructed by other institutions in which composition studies professionals participate. Though this difference can undermine our status in one or another institutional context, composition studies professionals' success at these discursive negotiations between teaching and research may position us to be catalysts for change as our research universities discover the rewards of good teaching and our teaching universities discover the importance of research.

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